

MARRIAGE AND KINSHIP SYSTEM AMONG BUNTS

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ABSTRACT

South Kanara is the coastal beauty of Mangalapur and presently known as Mangaluru and many rulers ruled this region and there are fifty lakhs people who estimated to speak Tulu along with the existing Bunts community and it is the homeland of Bunts community. The approximate Bunts population is about fifteen lakhs. Mangaluru was ruled by Portuguese, British and other Muslim kings and it was transformed to various lifestyle due to the influence of the these people. South Kanara is unique and they have unique lifestyle practice, commerce and education and having various communities such as Bunts, Billava, Shivalli Brashmins, Mogaveera, Devadigas Kumbara or potters Koragas and adhi dravida lineages, Christians, Muslims and other religious groups. Tulunad is very rich is ancient heritage such as Yakshagana, Bhootardhane, Kambala Nagartambila, Jain sculpture, matrilineal lineage culture, literature, cinema. Jain faiths are prominent in this region. This paper attempts to study the Marriage, family and Aliyasantana kattu of the Bunt community. The present paper is focusing on the Bunts community and their marriage, kinship and their change and continued practices.

KEYWORDS: Bunts, Family, Marriage & Aliyasantakattu

INTRODUCTION

South Kanara is bounded by Arabian and Western Ghats. Bunts literally mean the warrior group and famous for bold character and valour and courage. Tuluvas worships various deities and their Houses are built by the locally available materials, climate responses are very rainy and hot weather. Houses of the Bunts are possessing elegant and good looking houses. These Houses are eco-friendly sustainable and they are constructed according to the Bunt community necessities. Many people born here in South Kanara are spreading throughout the world and world famous due to their hardworking character. Historically South Kanara is very unique and the breathtaking beauty catches the eyes of many people across the globe. Hence, every year South Kanara attracts many travelers from abroad. Education and commerce is good in this region and existing communities are strong in their own nature and features. For the present study, this is purely dedicated to the Bunt community, Marriage, family and Matriarchal system change and continuity aspects are focused in this study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To make comprehensive study of the Bunts community
- Study the system of family and Marriage among Bunts
- To study the Aliyasantakattu or Matrilineal system

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Since Bunt community is a significant community of the South Kanara their population is about 15 lakhs and Tulu speaking people of the region having their own language, tradition, cultural heritage, having different lifestyle and folklore,

having excel in education, commerce, fashion and very rear and specific character of Matriarchal family kinship organization and maternal uncle is prominent instead of father, hence this study is prominent and significant and relevant in this region.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

For this study, two kinds of data were collected and gathered specially to study the past history and present conditions of Bunt community and to trace the ongoing changes and continuing elements in the community through participant and inside observation study. Interviews discussion with the elderly people in the communities specially experienced in this area. Besides, this attended many weddings, religious functions, Yakshagana, interpersonal study with the help of ethnographic observations in the data were recorded and analyzed for this present paper.

Bunt Family

The family comprises of husband and wife with offspring. Family among Bunts are having common residence, economic coordination and taking care of their children. Family is the center of all activities of mankind and it is the place where our primary personality develops, nourish and nurture takes place. Bunt families are more female centered and these families are typical matriarchal in nature and every activity in the family concentrated on the women and elder maternal uncle. Usually these families are having strong ties with parental house during the earlier society. The Bunt families are depending on agriculture for their livelihood and they are united and work together for the well being of the family members. The families are united during the family functions and they do have regular family get together and other agricultural allied activities. The Bunt ancient lifestyle was depicted in the ancient folklore of the region specially sandi, pardhana and old customary folksongs which usually found in the old Tulu language. Bunts have different cultural practices and they are hardworking in nature. Since agriculture needs lots of hard work and hence, they are commonly regarded as a highly progressive and enthusiastic people. The weather is very hot in this region and humidity is so high and they used to wear cotton saree and men normally wear lungi, modern people are having different outfits. But during the festive and other wedding occasions they wear Silk dhoti and silk saree and dress well during special occasions.

Matrilineal System of Kinship

Bunts are well known for matrilineal or Aliyasantana where females are given more scope to freedom. Descent, family name are carried by the mother line and it is the essence of the matrilineal system, usually inheritance goes through the mother's line and so does the succession. The female members are collectively responsible for the family matters; though the descent was by mother's side, management of property was vested in the hands of eldest male member that is maternal uncle of the family. Bunt women are very hard working in nature, never waste time by sitting lazily and said to be very creative and enthusiastic in nature.

Until recently the role of Bunt women in development was all but invisible and recently Bunt women proved to in all spheres of modern achievements. As Bunt women is the basic unit in the family and she is shouldering all most all the responsibilities in the family.

Bunt Marriage

Marriage is also unique and number of traditions were followed by them. Major decisions was taken by the assistance of female and other elderly members in the family. Marriage said to be very special among Bunts, it is the common pattern of

dressing during the special occasion. Bride and bridegroom specially dressed during the wedding and followed by Karimani and quantity of gold is common for married women and Bayake is performed after wedding for the pregnant women. She sends to mothers place for delivery. Women status and their family structure were followed by Aliysantana or Matrilineal family. Bunts practice a huge amount of dowry followed by and other unique traditions. This is a unique traditional system in which women were the main focus of families where the cultural heritage was transmitted through the female line.

The social institutions like family, marriage and kinship are always drawn the attention of many people in this. Bunts follow the matrilineal joint family system earlier but during the course of time it was transformed to nuclear families. But the practice still remains such as inheritance and other customary practice of wedding rituals. The main feature of the matrilineal system it's the system of inheritance. Female's role in decision making was appreciated. They have the privilege of taking decision related to the marriage, education, occupation, property matters, domestic matters, upbringing the children etc.

Females have the rights over the parental property share. Maternal uncle is having special significance in the family. His role is so important in the Bunt families. Soon after the marriage the wife is expected to live in the husband's house or it is an optional. If the condition is not good and suitable, she even stays with her parents. Dignity of the women is respected and it is the major concern for both parents and relatives after marriage, they should be treated equally and given property rights.

Presently, males are migrating from their original place of native to other parts of the world for the sake of better life and job but females were supported to educate and to earn money, but right now the situation was much changed due to the ongoing changes in the society, especially modernity and influence of western culture on the Indian soil, women have full-fledged freedom to work and economically sustainable and self reliant.

Bunts have been living in their ancestral homes. They lived under a joint family system governed by "Aliyasanthana" (Matriarchal) tradition. Our ancestors were following this system for generations together and according to their custom the entire property vested with eldest member of the family, either male or female known as "Yajaman" or "Yajamanthi". The family is succeeded through matrilineal line. They follow Aliyasantana system of inheritance that follows through the maternal uncle.

The family among Bunts consists of mother, father and the children, the family traced through the mother or female line like that of the Nairs of Kerala. Hence, the law of Aliyasanthana has given most importance. Here in this law only the descent that reckons through the female line. The daughter in law and the son in law will be only the observer the family and they are not taking any of the decisions. These relations were treated as a form of dignified guests. As for the status of women is concerned there is a hard and fast rule among the Bunts. But usually the yejaman or the head of the family and the trend of the local administration decides the status of the women. Ancient inscriptions show that there were some areas even ruled by the female rulers. In the 20th century Maravoor Duggammakka, Kolpe Lakshmakka, Ulipadi Muttakka, Marakada Lakshmakka, and Uppala Sitakka etc were the women worked for the society with more efficiency; they have protected the respect of the family, and helped the progress of the family. It has helped various families to improve their status and prestige in the society.

The Practice of Dowry

Dowry refers to the property given to the daughter by her parents and family to take with her into marriage. The giving and receiving of dowry have been part of Indian tradition, particularly among Hindus, for a longtime. It is usually a one-way flow of goods from the bride's family to the groom's family that may continue throughout the life, especially when important functions occur (Stein, 1988). In an ideal situation, the woman remains in control of the possessions that came as her dowry, but it is quite possible that the groom and his family will assume ownership of the possessions. This lack of control over her dowry may mean that woman has no economic collateral over her disposal. Technically giving dowry and receiving of dowry in India is illegal.

DOWRY AS A SYMBOL OF PRESTIGE

Dowry is considered as a symbol for reputation and prestige. Despite the fact that dowry is illegal and calls for penal action, people continue to practice it as a status symbol. Dowry has been the preferred economic transaction in marriages for many decades and continues to thrive by feeding into the patriarchal interests even in the present. This trend has been observed across the country, in the North, North-east, and west and in the south and cuts cross caste, class and religion. It was observed that perceptions on the practice of dowry had traditional, customary and religious bearing and also sentiments attached to kanyadhan. The practice got deeply ingrained in the culture among the community. Dowry for women and inheritance for men has been the cultural norm among the community. To give the impression that women are not deprived from inheritance and dowry has often been represented as compensatory wealth for inheritance. Many people justified the practice of dowry as means of recover the investment in their son's education. It was reported to be used as a financial assistance and a circulating pool or resource by the groom and his family. By doing so dowry could meet a lot of aspirations and unmet needs of the boys and their families. Parents of the girls are always concerned about the security of daughters in their marital homes and they try their best to keep the in-laws in good humour mainly by satisfying their material expectations either in cash or in kind.

The dowry as a practice and social evil commenced in early forties as a result of our youth opting for higher education since higher education seems to be costlier affair. The parents of such youth since they had paid for their son's education wanted this amount to be paid by the parents of the bride in the form of dowry which is easier to be insisted upon as pre-requisite. Bunt women suffer a lot and sometimes they become the victim of dowry. Many a times poor Bunt girl postpone her marriage due to the issue of the dowry.

MAJOR OBSERVATIONS OF THIS STUDY

- Bunt woman still remain neglected in the rural areas.
- The practice of dowry and Marriage and family structure and functions has been changed.
- Families are self reliant and they have simple lifestyle but during occasions they dress and spend well.
- Bunt women give more time to religious and customary practices like temple visit and worship of daivas.
- Bunt urban women more dynamic, confident and self-reliant.
- Matrilineal practices are still exist but taken a new form.
- Female status and employment have been drastically improved.
- Bunts have extravagant lifestyle during wedding and other functions
- Education and empowerment has been increased over the time.

- Few families are having property dispute due to sharing differences.
- Bunt women can be seen in various fields such as business, fashion industry, education, cultural heritage, Yakshagana artist.

SUGGESTIONS

Closing gender gaps among Bunts would get better results in the community in specific and national development in general. This particular study on Bunt women would come out with few suggestions. They are listed as below:

- Educational achievements still to be attained in villages among the Bunt communities.
- Economic independence: There are various economic strata among the Bunts. But the lower economic strata or the bottom-line to Bunt women marginalized economically and they need more care and concentration to bring them to the mainstream.
- Positive action to improve the political decision making.
- Reduce the women's work burden.
- Strengthen women's rights.
- Women should be provided with opportunities for leadership training.

CONCLUSIONS

Bunts are prominent caste of the South Kanara and their glory is predominant in every sphere of life. Their contribution to the society is more evident but still need to done more. Education, employment status in an organized sector is very low and still to be achieved more for the benefits of the women in larger society. Some women are empowered but more women need to be empowered. They need family and societal support but unfortunately few women do not enjoy the status due to low educational level in the villages and lacking of supportive families and they still suffer in the society. Politically, Bunt participation among women is very less and not motivated for many years. It is highly essential to participate woman in every sphere of life.

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